

Lincoln

GLOVER

E

457

.8

G56





Class _____

Book _____





THE CHARACTER

OF

ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

A

DISCOURSE

Delivered April 23d, 1865, at Straun's Hall,

JACKSONVILLE, ILL.,

BY

REV. L. M. GLOVER, D. D.,

Pastor 1st Presbyterian Church.

JACKSONVILLE:

PRINTED AT THE JOURNAL BOOK AND JOB OFFICE.

1865.

30

THE CHARACTER
OF
ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

A
DISCOURSE

Delivered April 23d, 1865, at Straun's Hall,

JACKSONVILLE, ILL.,

BY

REV. L. M. GLOVER, D. D.,

Pastor 1st Presbyterian Church.

JACKSONVILLE:
PRINTED AT THE JOURNAL BOOK AND JOB OFFICE.
1865.

JACKSONVILLE, April 24, 1865.

Rev. L. M. Glover, D. D.:

DEAR SIR—The undersigned, partaking of the common admiration of the very able and just manner in which you have delineated the life and character of the late lamented President of the United States, ABRAHAM LINCOLN, in your commemorative discourse pronounced yesterday, respectfully solicit a copy for publication if consistent with your feelings on the subject.

AND. McFARLAND,
JAMES DUNLAP,
WM. M. FOSTER,
THOMAS W. MELENDY,
F. E. DAYTON,
C. H. TEN EYCK,
J. NEELY,

JOSHUA MOORE,
ROBT. HOCKENHULL,
O. D. FITZSIMMONS,
RALPH REYNOLDS,
JOHN LOOMIS,
H. K. JONES,
A. McDONALD.

JACKSONVILLE, May 3, 1865.

Dr. A. McFarland, Col. James Dunlap and others:

GENTLEMEN—Yours of the 24th ult. is before me. Thanking you for the kind terms in which you speak of my discourse on the character of ABRAHAM LINCOLN, I cheerfully accede to your request, and herewith commit the manuscript of said discourse to your care for publication. Partaking of the common grief of the people at the irreparable loss which has befallen us, I am, in the bonds of Christ and of country,

Yours,

L. M. GLOVER.

DISCOURSE.

2ND. SAMUEL, 1 : 19:—The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places; how are the mighty fallen!

2ND. SAMUEL, 3 : 38:—And the King said unto his servants, Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?

Louis XIV of France, by a reign of dazzling splendor, impressed himself upon the imagination of his people as “the Grand Monarch,” and was familiarly called, in his day, “Louis the Great.” But when Massillon, the prince of the French pulpit, rose in the church of “Notre Dame,” to pronounce his oration at the obsequies of that King, the first words he uttered were these, “*GOD ALONE IS GREAT*,” at which the whole vast assembly spontaneously and reverently rose to their feet as if thrilled and awed by that simple, but impressive, announcement. That involuntary act of the congregation was less a tribute to the commanding power of the speaker than to the eloquence of the occasion and the sublime authority of truth.

Greatness is relative. In respect to God every created being is small—exceedingly diminutive. The finite can sustain no proper comparison with the Infinite. Hence Moses said, “Ascribe ye greatness unto our God.” His is the true, the absolute greatness. What is any man, however exalted in the gradations of earth and time, in contrast with Him? When set in the relation they sustain to that uncaused and eternal being what are the princes, the potentates, the intellectual giants who figure on this narrow scene of things; what an Alexander, a Caesar, a Newton or an Edwards? Only as sparks to the glowing fires which warm the universe; only as struggling rays to the central orb which floods that universe with light. When such comparisons are drawn, how little the creature called man appears, even the greatest man, the noblest of his race; for, in this view, the most exalted and the most abject stand well nigh upon the same level, since nothing, which in its measure

is limited, can approach that which is absolute or unlimited. Indeed, all men are so far equal that they are subject to like passions, infirmities, distempers, down-castings and fatal issues both of conduct and of life. They are alike crushed before the moth. Accident, disaster, sickness, death, these fall indiscriminately upon the children of Adam's race. "Man, at his *best estate*, is altogether vanity." The prince hath no certain exemption from evil to which the peasant is not equally entitled. In the grave, all human dust mingles; the humblest and most unknown lying down in the last sleep with kings and conquerors, the noble and honored of earth; for a solemn voice crieth, "All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field; the grass withereth, the flowerfadeth, because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it, surely the people is grass." Well, then, did the mighty preacher, already referred to, as the splendors of a throne lay shrunk and fading in the coffin before him, exclaim, "God alone is great," an utterance to which I would fain give an echo to-day in view of an event no less impressive, and far more afflicting than that which called forth the remark at first.

Human greatness is only seen and appreciated when withdrawn from these high contrasts, and reckoned by the common ideas which rule the subject among men in their relations one to another. Some persons rise high above their fellows in natural gifts, in acquirements, in wealth, in social position, in rank, and in the various resources of influence and of honor. There is some, perhaps much, true greatness in the world, and yet there is more passing under the name that is factitious, essentially accidental and without reality. Such is usually the distinction which birth creates, which large inheritances give rise to, and which, in so many instances, grows out of mere favoring circumstances. Thus some men come to station and power rather by what seems chance or a fortuitous combination of events than by the exertion of those commanding qualities by which mediocrity is overreached and the rewards of rarest excellency are won: And yet the general fact remains, that substantial greatness is not the outgrowth of accident in any case; that it is never a prize carelessly and blindly drawn out as in a lottery, but universally is the result of a developing and compacting of noble qualities, through the regular operation of those laws by which an unseen but vigilant

and ever-working Providence cultures particular men for particular destinies of responsibility, work, and glory.

And, I doubt not, this is the light in which history, when it shall be impartially written in a subsequent age, will place the name and character of Abraham Lincoln, late Chief Magistrate of the United States, and whose untimely and tragic end has shrouded a continent in gloom, and will send a thrill of horror around the globe. "The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places; how are the mighty fallen!" "Know ye not that there is a prince and a **GREAT MAN** fallen this day in Israel?"

The estimate of the lamented President, which is to be presented in this discourse, shall be both careful and candid; unbiased by partisan dislike on the one hand, and by the partialities of personal or political friendship on the other. On an occasion like this all generous minds are eager for the truth, and are quite willing that any former errors of judgment or feeling should be subverted and rectified. This is not the hour for party spirit to assert itself either in empty laudation of the departed, or in a poorly concealed delight that he is no more. It is a time, if ever, when men should be serious, impartial, and magnanimous; when they should deliver up their minds to truth, to the culture of a wholesome grief, and to common expressions of horror at the enormity of that crime which has brought a nation down to the dust in the very moment of its unrestrained joy at the prospect of speedy restoration and peace.

In regard to Abraham Lincoln, I think it no venture to say that he was not a common man, or to add to this, that he was a truly great man. Regarded officially, as to the trust he held, the authority he wielded, and the honor he enjoyed, it may safely be affirmed that none of earth's potentates surpassed him; he stood at the very apex of human ambition and hope, both as relates to earthly good actually attained and an earthly immortality virtually seemed.—That there was something apparently adventitious in the suddenness of his rise from a humble sphere to the most exalted station has struck us all, and that a fortunate concurrence of circumstances had more to do with this than any foreseen talent, genius, or qualification for statesmanship, is what every one is ready to admit; and yet none will deny that the pressure of responsibility and the process of

trial developed in him an unexpected capacity, and brought to view that solid substratum of character on which true greatness is built.

The intellectual qualities of Mr. Lincoln were well defined. They were *strong* and *solid*. Like the granite rock, his mind was somewhat rough, but it was massive. It had never been subjected to any very systematic culture, and hence it wanted the polish and beauty of which it was in a high degree susceptible. The University did nothing for it, and it remained to the last essentially a piece of nature's work on which the hand of art had not expended its skill. In the workings of that mind we discern many elements of power. It was not only strong, but lively and quick; in analysis, clear; in reasoning, cogent; in humor sparkling. It resembled the other works of nature in variety and exuberance, combining diversity in unity. One who cast his eye over it saw no dead level there, but pleasing alternations of hill and vale, waterfall and quiet stream, rock and flower. We cannot speak of it as profound; we cannot attribute to it genius; strong *common sense* was its predominating quality. Mr. Lincoln looked at things pretty much as they are. He took the world as it is. He was bewildered by no philosophies. He gave himself up to no hair-splitting casuistry. He followed off no "ignis fatuus" of speculation. His mind moved about among realities. What of truth he saw, he saw directly, as it were intuitively; hence his first view of a matter involving questions of propriety, prudence, and right was quite likely to be as sound as that to which others arrive only by a lengthened consideration. This quick and penetrating good sense is ever an element of greatness. It went far, in the case before us, towards supplying deficiencies of culture and learning. A talent so discerning and practical is more useful than any other, and it is vain to deny that it must and will have power. With the lamented President it was great power.

He also possessed that *soundness of judgment* with which wisdom is associated. The man who has exalted talents and little prudence, is like a well built vessel set afloat without sails or rudder; or he is like a meteor which blazes for an instant and then goes out in darkness. A person so constituted does not win confidence readily; people are slow in entrusting important interests to his care; they speak of him as unreliable, unsafe. But good judgment as evinced in a practical prudence wins favor; it is more mighty than

genius, learning, or eloquence; it gains ascendancy over men's minds when these fail to do so. This quality was prominent in him we mourn. Though a man of warm impulses, he had these under a masterly control; hence he did not yield to momentary ebullitions of feeling, or under the pressure of excitement give way to rashness of speech or of conduct. Through the obscurities which prejudice and passion throw over a matter, his calm eye penetrated to the light. When the conflict of extremes raged about him he had more than common of that wisdom which discerns the golden mean and steadily makes towards it. This quick perception of what is proper and best I think was quite characteristic of him. Hence the general prudence of his counsels, and his own unusual self-possession in the midst of perplexities and dangers. Had he been less calm and judicious he would have been less a man for the time. His rare good sense was a prime quality for the hour, conciliating confidence, and inspiring in the breasts of the people those sentiments of good will and approbation without which no ruler could bear up manfully or go forward steadily in the midst of such difficulties, and under such a burden of care and trouble. The nation believed his judgment sound and therefore implicitly trusted him. This shows that true power lies in those qualities which are least brilliant, and which are commonly thought to give the smallest promise of eminence; qualities which, when furnished with an opportunity and called into exercise, as they were in his case, confer greatness upon character which the eye of the historian is sure to discern and his pen to record.

Another characteristic of the man was *simplicity*. They whom circumstances rather than merit elevate to high positions often become ostentatious, and exhibit towards their inferiors a haughtiness which offends and repels. This disposition is the more disagreeable and unpardonable in those who have risen from humble fortune to lofty estate, and in the pride of their elevation quite forget the day of small things, ignore, so far as possible, their origin and turn their backs upon the associates and friends of other years. Mr. Lincoln was eminently simple in his tastes, manners, and habits. He was in no respect urbane or courtly. In dress and address he was plain and unadorned. He took on no airs. He looked down contemptuously upon no man, but ever put himself on terms of fa-

miliarity with all who approached him in a proper manner. Nor did the dignities to which he attained dazzle or bewilder him so but that he could recognize still the acquaintances of former times, and meet any man, however humble, face to face on the common terms of an equal humanity. He was, to the last, the same unassuming and simple minded man; true to his former history; true to early sympathies and friendships; true, perfectly true to the bent of his own genial nature. Such simplicity is a condition of real greatness, nay an essential element in it. False greatness is starched and showy, lofty and assuming, but actual greatness is inversely to such dispositions. A man is usually small in proportion as he fancies himself large, and struts, and puts on consequential airs, and demands respect. John Milton, Isaac Newton, and George Washington were simple and guileless as childhood itself; so was Abraham Lincoln, and true excellence, high worth and real greatness are ever so characterized.

Let me remark further that all the natural instincts of Mr. Lincoln's mind and heart lay in the same general direction as the qualities already named.

Among these was his *sense of right*. This seems to have been inborn, and it exhibited itself as a determining force in his character and life. He had a strong natural conscience, an innate sense of rectitude which led him to make a broad distinction between good and bad principles, and between right and wrong conduct. These are things which political men have been too much in the habit of confounding, and hence the moral blindness and infatuation which we have too often had occasion to complain of and to mourn over in the high places of the land, as evinced in the practical adoption of the maxim which is as much apart from real patriotism as it is from true religion, "Our country right or wrong," and as evinced further in the disposition and tendency to merge the idea of right into the idea of legality, thus exalting the legislation of men into equality with the legislation of God. Whatever weaknesses Mr. Lincoln had, and whatever errors he committed as a politician and a statesman, they did not lie in that direction. I am not now attributing to him the cultivated heart of piety; I speak here of the promptings of nature in him, that they were unmistakably and powerfully in favor of what is good and right. Hence, when a matter

involving any principle of rectitude was committed to his judgment, there was always a strong presumption amounting to certainty that his mind would gravitate towards a just view of it—that he would give his ultimate preference and preponderating choice to that side of the subject on which the moral considerations clustered. It cannot be doubted that he was ambitious to please, and that he was politic in the choice of means to secure popularity, but it is also clear that he was disposed rather to strive for the favor of the good than for the favor of the bad, that on all accounts he preferred the approbation and applause of the sober minded and right hearted portion of his fellow men. With such an instinctive tendency it may with propriety be said of him that “even his failings leaned to virtue’s side.”

Closely associated with that sense of right, was a quick intuition and *lore of justice*. Having such inborn convictions of rectitude, he would be wanting in sympathy with wrong in the relations of man to man. All injustice would naturally be abhorrent and a grief to him. He would instinctively take the part of the injured against his injurer. The oppressions practiced by the rich upon the poor would incite in such a breast the sentiment of indignation. The law's delay to vindicate the wronged, the quibbles of advocates designed to darken counsel and to hinder the vindication of truth would create a burning impatience in a mind so constituted. With the struggles and sorrows of the bondman a spirit so alive to justice would readily bear a part. Mr. Lincoln carried in him such a heart, and it gave quality to his treatment of men in every private and social relation. Respecting the rights of all, he sought to do justly with all. This devotion to rectitude ruled his practice as a lawyer and a politician. It also entered into his statesmanship when called to execute the highest trusts in the gift of the nation. We see in his public conduct no letting down of principle for the sake of advantage; no compromise between the convictions of his understanding and that desire too natural to man to conciliate the favor of those who do wrong.

At the same time he was eminently characterized by *kind* and *lenient dispositions*. The justice, of which he had so keen a sense, was not that severe and unbending attribute which is not assuaged by mercy or softened by compassion. There was nothing fierce or

savage in his nature. No element of cruelty entered into his spirit. He was morally incapable of the tyranny which rebels, who were conscious of having forfeited his clemency, were, of course, ready to charge him with, and of which the murderer, in the moment of his crime, proclaimed himself avenged. Abraham Lincoln a tyrant! Abraham Lincoln a Nero, a Caligula, a Charles IX, a Henry VIII! Impartial history will make no such record of him. Rather will it associate him with the most humane and beneficent of rulers, with Augustus, with Marcus Aurelius, with William III, and with Washington. His temper was not caustic and biting, but mild and amiable. The sarcasm which goes seathing through a man's soul is not ascribed to him, but rather a genial humor which sends sunshine and good cheer through all the avenues of feeling. His kind heartedness and clemency were proverbial. The law of kindness was in his mouth. He opened his lips to gratify and instruct, not to inflict a wound or to produce pain in any. He was a friend of the poor. He commiserated the down trodden and injured. He had no malignity towards any, even his bitterest enemies, but charity towards all. He loved man as man irrespective of color, condition, or circumstances. He was a sincere philanthropist, a friend of his race—of all races of human beings—but of the colored man especially, because more cast down than others and needing more sympathy and help to enable him to rise.

These moral instincts of our late President—his sense of right, of justice, and humanity were elements of real greatness. It is of such materials that the “column of true majesty in man” is reared. Intellect, learning, eloquence alone do not carry up the shaft. Power is not its base; genius is not its apex. Without high moral qualities it cannot rise in strength and beauty. These alone give consistency and weight to character. Without them, a man of larger gifts in all other respects would not make an Abraham Lincoln. Without them, he himself would have been diminutive and obscure. It was confidence in his character that carried him up, once and again, to the dazzling heights of power. In this their choice, the instincts of the people were not at fault. What they wanted in a President, they believed was realized in him, viz: *capacity and honesty*. They did not fear for his statesmanship when they saw that his heart was right. They were ready to take him

on trust as to all matters of public policy when convinced that he was a true man. They had little apprehension that he could wreck the Ship of State while such moral qualities with vigilant eyes were at the helm—that the Union could fall to pieces when such a girdle of virtues was lashed about it.

If it be said that it was the Presidency which made Mr. Lincoln great, it may be admitted that this was a condition of his greatness, the essential means of its full development. But mark, it is not every man that even the Presidency would make great. It has already failed to make some great who enjoyed its emoluments and honors. Elevation to that exalted place will not impart the elements of greatness to him who did not possess them before. Mr. Lincoln carried up to the nation's capitol the essential materials of all he afterwards became; and those materials, when cast into the fiery crucible of responsibility and trial, were molten into the shape and forms of majesty that now present themselves to view while we contemplate him as one of the noblest of men, and the most eminent ruler of his time.

Many persons, in the outburst of their partiality, speak of Abraham Lincoln as the second Washington, and the second father of his country. Now, to place any man in such proximity to that revered personage who, by common consent, is reckoned the greatest of earth's great ones, may appear quite presumptuous; the similarity and correspondence must be very striking to justify or give pertinence to any such comparison. Upon a careful analysis, however, of these two very illustrious characters I must candidly confess that there appears to me to be not a little in common between them. Both lived in stormy times; both passed through a revolution; both were manifestly born of and for the most fearful exigencies; both were men of rare good sense, of uncommon prudence, and of right moral sympathies; both, in their way, exhibited the lofty traits of courage, fortitude, patience, and magnanimity. General Washington, however, united in himself the military and civic virtues. The latter only can be claimed for Mr. Lincoln. It will not do, therefore, to press the comparison, though it may so touch at various points as to admit of its being drawn in general terms; at the same time it must be borne in mind that these men had qualities peculiar to themselves; also, that they lived at different eras, and acted

in the midst of emergencies somewhat similar, indeed, and yet, for the most part, entirely unlike. If it is events which, in the eye of history, give character to an administration then none can be more signalized in the future records of this country than the one which has just now so tragically closed. None is so crowded with occurrences of profound and lasting interest; none so stained with blood and yet none so marked with promise. Indeed, if it shall not be regarded as the most illustrious of all up to this date, it can only be because it was not the first in order of time. And I have no doubt that the judgment of posterity will be that George Washington was the instrument under God of founding this glorious Republic, and that Abraham Lincoln was the instrument under God of saving it. Where the greater honor lies it were difficult to tell.

Such in brief is the estimate I form of the character and services of the man at whose tragic end a nation is sunk in grief. I have aimed only at a delineation of what *he was*; what *he did* has passed before all eyes and is perfectly familiar.

He is no more! He slumbers with the mighty dead. His work is done and the measure of his fame is full. In an unsuspecting moment he fell by the hand of an assassin, a cowardly and fiendish assassin for whose foul crime the vocabularies of human language furnish no significant word. Manslaughter, assassination, murder, how tame even these words seem, and how inadequate to express the awful enormity as our souls feel it. These may tell the story of the outward act, but after all they leave us grasping after some form of thought capable of indicating the utter badness—the infinite malignity of the plot and of its execution. But the deed shall not go unpunished, for it is written “Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord, I will repay.” Again it is written “There is no darkness nor shadow of death where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves.” And it is written further, “He that fleeth of them shall not flee away, and he that escapeth of them shall not be delivered; though they dig into Hell, thence shall mine hand take them; though they climb up to Heaven thence will I bring them down; and though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence; and though they hide from my sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent and he shall bite them; and though they go into captivity before their enemies, thence will I

command the sword and it shall slay them ; and I will set mine eyes upon them for evil and not for good." The curse of the Almighty will rest on the perpetrator of this crime, as it rested on Cain, and even if he is not brought to condign punishment, as the probability is he will be sooner or later,* yet he will feel that his punishment is greater than he can bear, for he will be a vagabond and a wanderer in the earth, ever fleeing and yet never escaping from the shadow of his foul deed ; remorse, his accuser, following hard upon his footsteps as the unappeased avenger of blood.

Abraham Lincoln is dead. "The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places. How are the mighty fallen! Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon, lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph. Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew neither let there be rain upon you nor fields of offerings; for there the shield of the mighty is *vilely cast away* as though he had not been anointed with oil." And so it is that "One sinner destroyeth much good." The maddened brute, without understanding, may gore with his horn the proudest of human flesh. The mean man, the hardened wretch who has no character to save and is morally incapable of any good, may yet do boundless mischief; he can strike down the righteous, he can *vilely cast away* the shield of the mighty; by a single act, in a single moment he can cast down the heart of a jubilant people and overspread a great nation with gloom. So fell our Saul as if he had not been chosen of God and anointed with oil.

How great the change which has come upon our dead President ! How sudden and how vast the transition ! He has passed from time to eternity, from the shifting and changeable to the permanent and enduring. His offices and honors he has laid aside. His ear is now forever deaf to the applause of his countrymen, and will not listen to the strains of panegyric which posterity waits to accord him. And may we not trust that his spirit is where both his name and fame are, among the mighty and the worthy dead ? A general conviction is that he was ready for this great change, ready in the only way by which readiness can be secured. Oppressed by his respon-

*On the 27th of April, John Wilkes Booth, the assassin, was captured, and killed in being captured, near Port Royal, Va., thus meeting his doom in less than two weeks from the date of his crime.

sibilities, weighed down by private grief and by public calamities, often at his wit's end to know what to say and what to do, it would be marvelous indeed had he not felt constrained to lay hold on God for wisdom, direction and aid, nay, if he had not come to the cross of Jesus, as a stricken sinner, for comfort and hope. But it would be still more marvelous if this man, in whose behalf a whole nation was in a ceaseless agony of prayer, had not been inclined to rule in righteousness and even to yield himself up a willing captive and servant to Christ. If reports are true, President Lincoln not only imitated Solomon in the search for true wisdom where alone it can be found, but David also and other pious princes in the exercise of faith, and the cultivation of the temper and the habit of devotion. Allowing it to have been so, then the change which has come upon him is as blessed as it is great; the aching head is at rest; the throbbing heart is calm and peaceful; the burden of a nation's welfare no longer oppresses the anxious mind, and the unfettered spirit has risen on jubilant pinions to the home of the good and the true. If it were so, then the honors of a Chief Magistrate on earth are only laid aside for those of an eternal royalty and kingship with Christ and the Father; the fading glory of this world being only exchanged for the brighter and more enduring glory of Heaven. If it is so, then write, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors and their works do follow them."

How are we to understand the event which has occasioned such universal sorrow, and what lesson of practical good may be derived from it? Regarded in the light of a divine judgment it must have some designed relation to the sins of the people, and yet to their highest welfare likewise; that relation may be general or it may be special; it may be prospective or it may be retrospective; it may be a punishment or it may be a chastening. I confess myself incapable of reading the lesson at present. I know not what the Great Ruler of the Universe means by it. "How unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out!" And is it not presumptuous in any man to stand forth at once with his divining rod and declare, as with certainty, the interpretation of the thing? Different persons will of course view it from their own standpoint and through the medium of their own peculiar opinions, prejudices

and passions. Some will say it for this, and some for that. One will assert that it is the last tremendous judgment upon slavery and complicity with it; another that it is a rebuke in advance of Presidential clemency towards the rebellious; a third that it is an interposition to prevent any compromise of the rights and welfare of the colored race; a fourth that it is a providential removal of the main obstacle to the pacification of the country, the speedy reinstalling of the Union and the Constitution over the whole land. I am amazed at the boldness and confidence with which such views are actually put forth. We might almost fancy that the old prophets were risen from the dead when we hear persons speak on the subject in such a spirit of solemn earnestness and authority as if they held relations of immediate intercourse with Heaven, and knew by a direct inspiration the will and decrees of the Almighty. As to myself, I must wait for further light before accepting their utterances. At present I am jealous of all human suggestions on the subject, especially of any which, designedly or undesignedly, by friend or foe, reflect upon the lamented President and tarnish the brightness of his fair and well earned fame as a wise ruler, a friend of the lowly, and a servant of the human race. Let us be content to wait and pray until all the truth shall burst upon us, for

“God is his own interpreter,
And He will make it plain.”

At the same time, I would humbly suggest that every judgment is a call to personal humiliation and penitence before God. And I would add that whatever the main and ultimate design of this afflictive event may be, we can hardly fail to observe in it a solemn rebuke of national vanity, and a divine correction of that tendency too common among the dwellers on earth to put undue confidence in man, in princes, and munitions of war, and especially that tendency to hero-worship and the unmeasured adulation of the great, which the infinite Ruler can only regard with an intense and holy jealousy as so much contempt of his supreme authority and of his all-controlling agency in the affairs of men and nations. Whatever else we fail, through ignorance, to discern in this providence, this lesson comes clearly and impressively out of it, that “God

alone is great," and that praise as well as power belongeth exclusively unto Him.

"How are the mighty fallen!" But the lesson of the hour is not one of despair. The nation has not fallen with its prostrate Chief. The Constitution has not fallen with its chosen defender. The laws have not fallen with him who executed them in the highest magistracy of the land. The Union has not fallen with him who so diligently sought to throw around it the strong bands of national supremacy. The cause of humanity has not fallen with its mighty standard bearer. The death of the President has invaded and changed nothing that is fundamental in our civil structure. The ancient buttresses of the Government stand firm. No strife for the succession has arisen in consequence of these events. The supreme authority has already passed quietly and without question into other hands according to the fixed order of the Constitution. The Cabinet is entire. The status of the army and navy is unchanged. The prospect of victory and of peace is as near at hand, and the beneficent work of emancipation is as likely to go forward as it was before. Society is not unhinged, order is not subverted, anarchy is not inaugurated. The entire machinery of law and of authority moves smoothly and powerfully on. Doubtless the assassin thought to stun the nation, to paralyze it, to cast it down in the moment of its exultation; perhaps he dreamed that the life of the Republic would flow out with the blood of its representative, his distinguished victim. If so, it was but a dream. The Republic stands and will stand. Its existence has no absolute dependence upon any one man. To millions it seemed that President Lincoln was indispensable to the nation, and the first rush of feeling at the news of his death was that all was lost. But all is not lost. Nothing that is vital to a great people lies within the power of an assassin. He may destroy the representative man, but the principles represented, if good and true, remain and flourish still. The mighty fall, but justice, truth and freedom fall not with them. These are imperishable. Though often cast down in the persons of their defenders, they yet rise again in the persons of other defenders and pursue their march towards universal supremacy. There is an ever working, eternal providence that watches over the interests which wicked men would thwart, and that gives vitality to the righteous cause.

So that no sincere and humble effort of good men fails or is fruitless. Whatever was undertaken by President Lincoln, that was right in itself, is sure to be achieved, though he is gone. The constitution and government will be vindicated and established, the Union will be restored, the liberties handed down from our fathers will be maintained and transmitted to those who are coming after us, and freedom will become universal throughout the land. Slavery, the occasion of so many of our public troubles and of our private griefs will, at no distant day, come to an end. Indeed it may be said to have virtually ceased already. It is so, so far as the declared purpose of the people and of the government is concerned. Mr. Lincoln decreed its destruction—but the Almighty had decreed it before him—and it is sure to be accomplished. The human instrument has perished, but the divine purpose will go on. The hand of the assassin cannot arrest the march of events, or turn back the purposes which rule the universe, and through the long years and ages of time, by means often mysterious, sometimes awful, move on the ear of improvement and work out the best welfare of man. Indeed, truth seems to become more vital and commanding by opposition. Stricken to the ground it rises again with renewed vigor and force. Blood poured out in its defense does but enrich its roots in preparation for a new and more bountiful harvest of good. Whatever just principles President Lincoln sought to advance while alive are more upspringing and forceful now that he is dead. The grave hallows them, and the poor dumb mouth on which the heavy clod rests will continue to speak in their behalf more eloquently and effectively than the living voice ever did or could, and hence it will prove, as in numberless other instances, so in this, that “though the work-
en die the work goes on.”

The fame of the departed, too, is secure. The assassin may have thought to arrest that fame in mid career, to mutilate by separating it from its objects. It was in vain. He applied himself to his task too late. The work on which the glory of his victim would rest was already accomplished. The great facts out of which the web of his life story would be wrought had already transpired. The record was already made up. Had he perished four years earlier, that record would have been short and comparatively unimportant. A few lines then would have sufficed for all that was noteworthy in

his career. But since then so rapidly have events been generated, events of which he seemed the centre and soul, that volumes alone can contain them. Had he lived to finish the term of public service to which he was called his fame might have reached a more rounded fullness; and he doubtless looked forward with pleasing expectations to the time when, his country united and tranquilized and all manner of good descending upon it as the results of his faithful labors, laying aside the cares of office, he might return to private station among the people he loved so well, and while reaping the tribute of their gratitude might also participate with them in the blessings of a beneficent and stable government which, though purchased by infinite toil and sacrifice, are worthy of it all. Alas, it was not to be so. And yet the cutting short of his life does not contract his fame, which was essentially complete when the fatal shaft flew; indeed, I am not sure but martyrdom was intended to give an unusual brightness to the immortality which was already gathering in a glorious halo about his name.

Thus have I spoken of the deceased President, not in the spirit of a politician or of partisanship, but of sincere admiration, and I feel quite sure that my words have met a warm response in every generous heart. Love of worth is a prerogative which party lines cannot circumscribe, and which prejudice ought not to repress. It is a privilege which nature gives, that we may admire flowers blossoming elsewhere as well as about our own dwelling. The beauties of sky, of ocean, and of earth are for man, and all are entitled to the varied emotions of pleasure which they are adapted to excite; much more, then, have we a common inheritance in all that gives a real lustre and a true attractiveness to any human character. All good, great, and useful men belong to their country and their race. Their names and fame are in no private keeping. Their ownership is not vested in a party or a clan. None can appropriate their light or their glory in a sense that all others may not do the same. Like the sun and moon and stars, they shine for all mankind and they shine for all ages.

That this man had weaknesses, had faults, and that he committed errors none can doubt, and no one was more ready to acknowledge it than himself. Some regrets hang over the memory of the noblest and the best, for "to err is human," and, as the Scriptures assert,

"Great men are not always wise." His failings whatever they may have been, were such as are common to men, and such as are incidental to high station. But even of these he plainly had far less than we have been accustomed to see in public men. He had no degrading habits, he practiced no low vices. He was not fond of ambitious displays; he was not given to strong drink; his lips were not addicted to profanity. Nor am I aware that he had acquired any special fondness for dramatic representations, or that he had formed the habit of attending upon the amusements of the stage. I think it my duty, however, to say that in common with many others, I have a regret that, if he was to fall by the hand of an assassin, the event had not occurred elsewhere, in the street, in the council chamber, in the national mansion, or even in the sanctuary of God. And yet my regret does not take the form of expression adopted by some, that being in the theatre he was out of God's jurisdiction and forfeited the divine protection, but that regret is this, that besides the general impropriety of the indulgence for one whose example gives law, and especially while public affairs were so troubled, the fact should have been made by "wicked hands" to serve as the link of destiny, and seized upon as the fatal condition of such universal down-casting and grief. And yet in all this painful matter there is nothing which a gracious God cannot or which a generous people will not forgive, nothing but the atrocious crime of him of whom it might be said as of another whose name is never mentioned but with horror, "It had been good for that man if he had never been born," while, as relates to the victim himself, the cloud which overshadows his last hour is thin and transient, but the glory behind will be resplendent and perpetual.

And now I have to commend the character of Abraham Lincoln to the study of all, especially of young men, whose aspirings are naturally so ambitious and hopeful, but who in their ignorance and haste are liable to mistake the true conditions of honorable and successful effort. It is not the accident of birth, or wealth, or social position, or official place that gives true and lasting eminence. Without an underlying virtue all these are baseless and vain. Good sense, simplicity, sincerity, honesty, love of right, of justice and of humanity, above all the fear of God, these were the undergirdings of character in him we mourn, these the conspiring forces which made

him truly great. Therefore, our youth of promise and worthy longings, who would place themselves in the way of honorable distinction, should get wisdom and understanding, should "buy the truth and sell it not," should form right purposes and steadily pursue them, should live for the attainment of useful ends alone, agreeable to the poet's advice,

"Honor and shame from no condition rise;
Act well your part; *there all the honor lies.*"

And now let us all prove ourselves worthy of the time and the emergency. The lesson of the hour is one of hushed solemnity; one of penetrating personal inspection and inquiry. "In the day of adversity, consider." Calmness and silence become us in the presence of such events. Impatience, excitement, and passion ill befit a people circumstanced as we are. Bitterness, wrath, clamor, evil speaking, revilings, and all words of virtuperation are unsuited to our present condition. These, when indulged, are elements of discord and anarchy. Let those who would suitably honor the memory of Abraham Lincoln, imitate and seek to diffuse the spirit which was eminently characteristic of him. Let them be kind and courteous, charitable and tolerant; let them chasten down the asperities which may burn in the heart or rise to the lips; let them be patient, forbearing, magnanimous; let them illustrate the virtues they admire in him they fondly call the father of his country. Following so goodly an example will secure to us and to our children greater blessings than any that are achieved by arts or arms, will give us peace, union, strength, liberty, religion—all that can make the present agreeable or the future glorious.

Another lesson of the hour is a hopefulness based upon the reality, the certainty, and the unfailing wisdom of divine providence. The heavens are not about to fall, the earth is not about to be upheaved, chaos and wild disorder are not about to be launched upon us; all is and all will be safe because God reigns, and because Christian people in their extremity will put their trust in him. There is also a rational faith in public men and in the general virtue of the people, which inspires the hope that all will be well.

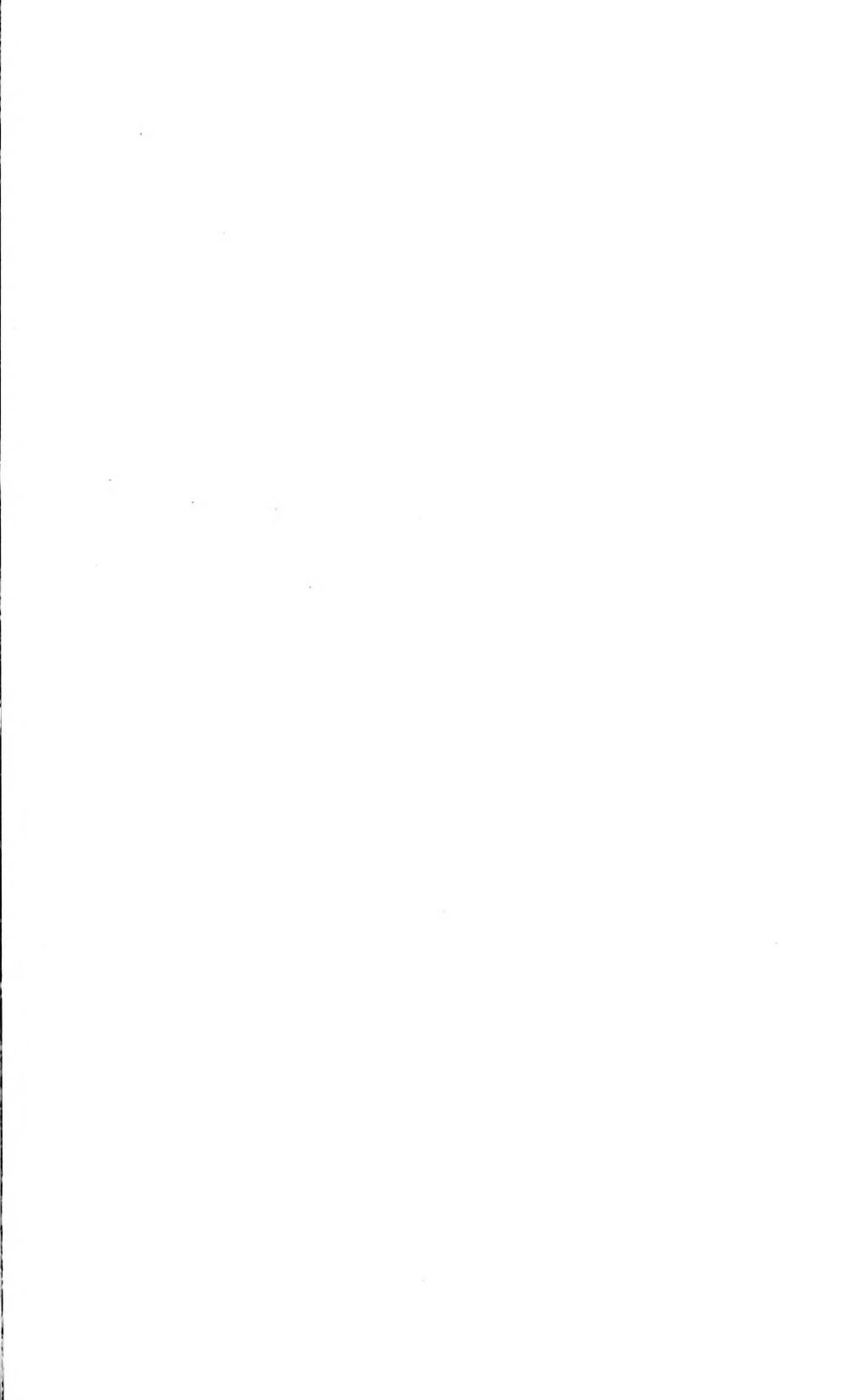
And finally, prayer is an important, perhaps the most important duty to be learned and practiced at this time and in the midst of these calamities, for "God is our refuge and strength, a very pres-

ent help in trouble." It is prayer that has buoyed up the Ship of State through the storms of the last four years; prayer that inspired the mind of our President in the straits to which he was often reduced; prayer that gave courage to the hearts and vigor to the hands of the brave men who have fought our battles and achieved our victories. Therefore let not prayer be restrained now that the nation's Chief has fallen, for another has taken his place who, for aught we know, may be equally solicitous of the same kind offices at the throne of grace that were cheerfully bestowed upon his lamented predecessor, and yet if he is not, he only needs them all the more. And should there be any misgivings in regard to the new President's habits, principles, or policy, nothing is so likely to prove them needless, or to disappoint all fear as the earnest, sympathetic, united prayers of a great people; such remembrance at the throne of mercy will at least assure him of the people's desire to confide in him, and will naturally produce in him the reciprocal desire to prove himself worthy of that confidence. Let us also pray that God would cause the wrath of man to praise him and restrain the remainder thereof, and especially that he would turn the current of our afflictions into channels which shall convey increasing good to the land and the nations.

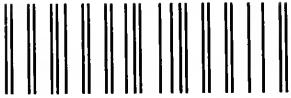
This discourse is now ended. I have told the story of Abraham Lincoln as well as I could in one brief hour. That hour is a striking emblem of the transientness appertaining to his and every human life. A few hasty years are passed, then comes the "last of earth;" a few solemn words are spoken and all is over. Since, therefore, life is so fleeting let us all apply ourselves diligently to life's most important work, that whenever, and in whatever form the messenger of death may come we may be ready with our record, and by the rich mercy of God in Christ ready also for an everlasting reward.







LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 011 839 333 8